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# HEPATITIS C PREVENTION

ALMOST 4 MILLION  
AMERICANS ARE  
INFECTED WITH  
HEPATITIS C VIRUS

THIS INFORMATION WILL HELP YOU TO  
UNDERSTAND WHAT HEPATITIS C IS  
AND HOW TO PREVENT GETTING IT.  
READ THIS TO SEE IF YOU SHOULD  
HAVE A BLOOD TEST FOR HEPATITIS C.

## **WHAT IS HEPATITIS C?**

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV), which is found in the blood of persons who have this disease. The infection is spread by contact with the blood of an infected person.

## **HOW SERIOUS IS HEPATITIS C?**

Hepatitis C is serious for some persons, but not for others. Most persons who get hepatitis C carry the virus for the rest of their lives. Most of these persons have some liver damage but many do not feel sick from the disease. Some persons with liver damage due to hepatitis C may develop cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver and liver failure which may take many years to develop.

# HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF FROM GETTING HEPATITIS C?

*HCV is spread primarily by exposure to human blood.*

- Don't ever shoot drugs! If you shoot drugs, stop and get into a treatment program. If you can't stop, never reuse or share syringes, water, or drug works.
- The surest way to protect yourself against any sexually transmitted disease is not to have sex at all or to have sex only with one steady, uninfected partner.
- If you are having sex, but not with one steady partner, you should use a latex condom correctly and every time to help protect you and your partner from diseases spread by having sex.
- If you are a health care worker, always follow routine barrier precautions and safely handle needles and other sharps.
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors, or other personal care articles. They might have blood on them.

## HEPATITIS C IS NOT SPREAD BY:

- sneezing
- hugging
- coughing
- sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses
- food or water
- casual contact

## COULD I ALREADY HAVE HEPATITIS C?

Ask your doctor for a blood test for hepatitis C if:

- you received a blood transfusion or solid organ transplant (e.g., kidney, liver, heart) before July, 1992
- you were treated with a blood product for clotting problems before 1987
- you **EVER** injected street drugs, even if you experimented a few times many years ago
- you were ever on long-term kidney dialysis
- you have ever had a sexually transmitted disease



## WHY SHOULD I BE TESTED FOR HEPATITIS C?

Early diagnosis is important so you can be:

- counseled about how to prevent transmission of HCV to others.
- checked for liver disease and get treatment, if indicated.

Many people who are at risk for hepatitis C are at risk for hepatitis A and hepatitis B. Check with your doctor to see if you should get hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccines.

***There is no vaccine to  
prevent hepatitis C.***

## FOR INFORMATION ON VIRAL HEPATITIS:

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*call* the Hepatitis Hotline at  
1-888-4HEPCDC  
1-888-443-7232

*or access* the Internet at  
[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/  
hepatitis/hepatitis.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/hepatitis.htm)

*or write*

Hepatitis Branch, Mailstop G37  
Division of Viral and  
Rickettsial Diseases  
National Center for Infectious Diseases  
Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention  
Atlanta, GA 30333  
or  
Contact your state or local health  
department

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